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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD**

Written statement* submitted by the International Federation of ACAT, a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2002]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting
non-governmental organization(s).



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ENG

Massive violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in Cameroon

The International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture) wants to draw the attention of members of the Commission to massive violations of human rights perpetrated in Cameroon and the DRC whereby the civilian population is the main victim.

DRC : A civilian population hostage to serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law

In the DRC the civilian population is hostage to a conflict that is worsening in full view of the international community and is victim of intolerable suffering.

Already almost 3 million children, women and men have been killed following foreign occupation, more than 2 million people have been internally displaced and 16 million others are in danger, especially of famine and illness that are inexorably linked to the war within the country.

The situation is getting worse all the time, especially in the eastern part of the country which is still largely under foreign occupation. Massacres and atrocities continue to be perpetrated with impunity: rape, spreading viruses as a weapon of war, assassinations, kidnappings, pillage, torture by the military, uncontrolled armed groups or the RCD (Congo Rally for Democracy) forces are on the increase against a terrified population. During 2001 12 women were buried alive in Mwenga in the southern Kivu province!

Moreover, the arrest and arbitrary detention of a number of political opponents, students and journalists, often with violence, expose the unwillingness of the Congo authorities to return to the rule of law in the country. The prison system is deplorable: during his last visit to the DRC, from 19 July to 2 August 2001, Mr Roberto Garretón, then special UN rapporteur for the country, spoke to a number of prisoners who reported being subjected to appalling torture in dungeons where they were held in secret.

The Congolese judicial system is totally ineffectual in dealing with the vast number of crimes committed since the hostilities began. The unwillingness of the international community to intervene means impunity becomes a little more entrenched each day in the Great Lakes Region, removing all hope of implementing the rule of law and of an end to the conflict in the DRC.

In view of the seriousness of these violations and the urgency of the situation, FIACAT asks the members of the Human Rights Commission immediately to:

- persuade all parties in the conflict in the DRC to respect the Lusaka agreements of 1999 and engage fully in dialogue among the parties in Congo;
- ensure that all perpetrators of crimes are brought before the international criminal courts without delay and that the victims are fairly compensated;
- ask that the special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, the special rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DRC and a member of the working group on forced or involuntary disappearances immediately be invited to visit the DRC;

- ask that an international commission of inquiry be sent to the DRC in order to assess the situation, determine violations of international humanitarian law and of international standards on human rights and identify perpetrators of crimes.

Cameroon: Human rights violations carried out by the Operational Command force have already led to several thousand deaths

The International Federation of ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture) underlines once again this year the impunity that goes unchecked in Cameroon.

For two years now national and international human rights organisations, including a member of our organisation, ACAT-Cameroon (Littoral branch), have been denouncing the systematic practise of torture and numerous cases of disappearances and extrajudicial executions that are believed to be the work of the Operational Command Force, set up in February 2000 by President Biya to fight banditry in the Littoral province.

The discovery since the beginning of 2000 of mass graves believed to be linked to these Command Forces sent a shock through the international community. The government has not to date, however, been able to provide a credible explanation for the numerous cases of disappearances reported.

On 29 March 2001, when it made an oral statement, FI.ACAT told the members of the Human Rights Commission about the disappearance of 9 young people from the Bepanda Omnisport area in Douala, following their arrest by the security forces on 23 January 2001. These young people, suspected of having stolen a bottle of gas, were transferred to the Operational Command Headquarters and are believed to have been summarily executed between 31 January and 8 February 2001. Their bodies were then covered in acid according to accounts by members of the security forces. This case provides a typical example of the methods of torture used by the Operational Command to maintain order in the Littoral province.

Under pressure from the national and international community an inquiry was opened on the matter but the legal process is at a standstill because of the stalling techniques used by the authorities in their embarrassment.

However this is anything but an isolated matter. Some time before, ACAT Cameroon had received numerous reports of torture, extrajudicial disappearances and executions and continues to do so.

Human rights associations investigating the abuses committed by the Operational Command Forces and objecting to human rights violations are constantly threatened and intimidated.

Proof is hidden or destroyed and the families of those who have disappeared are dissuaded from reporting the matter to the relevant authorities. In most cases they are unable to recover the bodies of their relatives.

The international community is slowly mobilising in view of the extent of this tragedy. In November 2000, the UN Committee against torture stated that torture was still "a very common practice" in Cameroon and recommended the Cameroon government in particular "to consider dismantling the special forces created as part of the fight against banditry". On 17 May 2001, the European Parliament also adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in

